

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 25423 01 OF 03 021536Z
ACTION NEA-03

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O 021733Z OCT 75
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3369

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 25423

FOR NEA/EGY (THREE COPIES) DUNFORD FROM CLARK

EO 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: AMGT
SUBJECT: CAIRO OFFICIAL INFORMAL NO. 220

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT.)
2. WHEN NAV WAS IN WASHINGTON, HE SAW PAUL BOEKER AND THEY DISCUSSED PAUL'S RETURN TO AMMAN VIA CAIRO. COULD YOU PLEASE LOCATE BOEKER AND CONFIRM HIS TRAVEL PLANS VIA CAIRO.
3. NORRIS TRAVEL: WE THINK IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY USEFUL FOR NORRIS TO COME TO CAIRO IN NOVEMBER TO GET HIS FEET WET. ED CASEY AND HIS MERRY CREW WILL DO THE PLANNING.
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4. PROPOSED ANSWERS REQUESTED FOR HAMILTON SUBCOMMITTEE.

FUNDAMENTALISM

-- Q. THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT ARRESTED A NUMBER OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS IN JULY 1985. WHY DID THIS CRACKDOWN OCCUR?

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-- A. THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT ARRESTED THREE SMALL GROUPS OF MUSLIM FUNDAMENTALISTS IN JULY 1985. THE FIRST GROUP INCLUDED SHEIKH HAFEZ SALAAMA AND A DOZEN OF HIS FOLLOWERS, MOSTLY YOUNG MEN. EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES PUBLICLY EXPLAINED THESE ARRESTS AS HAVING ARISEN FROM THE POSSESSION AND/OR DISTRIBUTION OF SEDITIOUS PAMPHLETS,

DOCUMENTS, AND PAPERS -- INCLUDING WRITINGS BY SOME OF THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT SADAT; CALLS FOR THE RELEASE OF THOSE CONVICTED FOR THAT CRIME OR RELATED EVENTS; ANTI-CAMP DAVID PAMPHLETS, ETC. THIS ARREST OF SHEIKH HAFEZ SALAAMA AND SOME FOLLOWERS BROUGHT TO A HEAD THE CONFRONTATIO HAD BEEN BREWING THROUGHOUT THE SPRING OF 1985, AND WHICH PUBLICLY ERUPTED FOLLOWING THE MAY 4, 1985 DEBATE ON ISLAMIC SHARIA (KORANIC LAW) IN THE PEOPLES ASSEMBLY. BY MID-AUGUST, SHEIKH HAFEZ AND THOSE ARRESTED WITH HIM HAD ALL BEEN RELEASED AS THE RESULT OF FINDINGS BY A STATE SECURITY COURT THAT THERE WERE NO ADEQUATE LEGAL GROUNDS FOR CONTINUING TO HOLD THEM.

-- THE SECOND GROUP OF ARRESTEES WAS THE SO-CALLED "FAYOUM GROUP," LED BY SHEIKH OMAR ABDEL RAHMAN. THIS SHEIKH HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN CHARGED AS A DEFENDANT IN BOTH MAJOR TRIALS ENSUING FROM THE SADAT ASSASSINATION AND ASSOCIATED VIOLENCE IN UPPER EGYPT, AND ON BOTH OCCASIONS WAS ACQUITTED. SHEIKH OMAR AND 23 FOLLOWERS WERE ARRESTED IN JULY FOLLOWING A DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE APPOINTMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF AWQAF (ISLAMIC ENDOWMENTS) OF AN IMAM TO REPLACE SHEIKH OMAR AT A FAYOUM MOSQUE. ACCORDING TO REPORTS IN OPPOSITION PAPERS IN RECENT WEEKS, SHEIKH OMAR REMAINS IN PRISON, THOUGH ALL THOSE ARRESTED WITH HIM HAVE BEEN RELEASED.

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-- THE THIRD GROUP OF 13 ARRESTEES WERE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY IN ALEXANDRIA ALSO FOLLOWING A DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE NAMING OF A NEW IMAM BY THE MINISTRY OF AWQAF. THOSE ARRESTED HAD REPORTEDLY PARTICIPATED IN STONING OF WORSHIPPERS AS THEY ARRIVED FOR FRIDAY PRAYERS, STEALING AND/OR BREAKING OF MOSQUE PROPERTY, AND THE LIKE. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THIS THIRD GROUP OF ARRESTEES IS STILL UNDER DETENSION.

-- AS SUGGESTED ABOVE, THE ARREST OF THESE THREE GROUPS OF ISLAMIC HARDLINERS CAME AGAINST A BACKDROP OF HEIGHTENED ISLAMIC POLITICAL ACTIVITY EARLIER THIS YEAR -- THE PEOPLES ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON ISLAMIC SHARIA, EARLIER ASSEMBLY DELIBERATIONS ON THE PERSONAL STATUS LAW, CALLS FOR PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS IN SUPPORT OF SAND OTHER PRIOR EVENTS. THESE ARRESTS WERE EVIDENCE OF PRESIDENT MUBARAK'S DETERMINATION TO DEFINE CLEARLY LIMITS TO ACTS OF DISSENT BY ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS WITHIN HIS MORE LIBERALIZED POLITICAL SYSTEM.

-- Q. DO THE FUNDAMENTALISTS POSE A SIGNIFICANT THREAT

TO PRESIDENT MUBARAK?

-- A. IN THE SHORT TERM, ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT. EGYPT HAS NO "KHOMEINI" ON THE HORIZON. THIS ABSENCE OF ANY ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP FIGURE CAPABLE OF DRAWING BROAD POPULAR SUPPORT, PLUS THE RELATIVELY LIMITED NUMBER OF ISLAMIC ACTIVISTS -- SEVERAL THOUSAND AND MOSTLY YOUNG -- DEFINE THE IMMEDIATE SITUATION. HOWEVER, A SIGNIFICANT THREAT COULD ARISE IN THE FUTURE -- GIVEN THE PLACE OF

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 CAIRO 25423

FOR NEA/EGY (THREE COPIES) DUNFORD FROM CLARK

EO 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: AMGT
SUBJECT: CAIRO OFFICIAL INFORMAL NO. 220

ISLAM IN EGYPTIAN SOCIETY AND CULTURE -- ESPECIALLY IF THERE IS A DRAMATIC DETERIORATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE BROAD MASSES OF EGYPTIANS. AN "ISLAMIC ALTERNATIVE" WOULD BE ONE POSSIBILITY IF SOCIAL CONDITIONS TURNED SHARPLY DOWNWARD. THERE ARE NO DISTINCTIVE SIGNS AT PRESENT THAT THIS IS OCCURRING -- DESPITE THE WORSENING ECONOMIC SITUATION -- BUT SUDDEN CHANGES CANNOT BE ENTIRELY DISCOUNTED.

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-- Q. WHAT CAN PRESIDENT MUBARAK DO TO DEFUSE THE

POLITICAL CHALLENGE OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM?

-- A. THE BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN EGYPT'S RULING ESTABLISHMENT AND THE FORCES OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM HAS AT NO TIME IN CONTEMPORARY EGYPTIAN HISTORY FAVORED, OR EVEN SERIOUSLY THREATENED TO FAVOR, THE LATTER. PRESIDENT MUBARAK'S FIRST AND MOST ESSENTIAL PRIORITY IS TO DEMONSTRATE THROUGH ACTION HIS OWN LEGITIMACY -- AND THAT OF THE GOVERNMENT -- TO THE EGYPTIAN POPULACE AT LARGE. IN ESSENCE, THIS MEANS CARRYING OUT DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES THAT ARE SUPPORTED BY PUBLIC OPINION.
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IN EGYPT, ONE PIECE OF CONVENTIONAL WISDOM IS THAT FAILURE BY THE GOE TO PROVIDE SOLUTIONS TO THE NATION'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, OR AT LEAST HOPE FOR THE SOLUTION OF THESE PROBLEMS, WILL PROVIDE FERTILE GROUND FOR ISLAMIC OPPORTUNISTS TO WIN PUBLICG. THERE IS DOUBTLESS MUCH TRUTH IN THIS.

-- THE SECOND TACTIC FOR THE MUBARAK GOVERNMENT IN ITS CONTEST WITH ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IS TO SHOW, THROUGH ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RULING ESTABLISHMENT -- NOTABLY AL AZHAR AND THE MINISTRY OF AWQAF -- THAT ISLAM ABHORS EXTREMISM, AND THAT THE FUNDAMENTALIST HARDLINERS HAVE NO MONOPOLY ON DIVINE WISDOM. OVER THE YEARS, THE NASSER/SADAT/MUBARAK REGIMES HAVE HAD REASONABLE SUCCESS HERE. THE MUBARAK GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO CONSCIOUSLY ENCOURAGED SECULAR THINKERS AND ISLAMIC MODERATES TO PROPAGATE THEIR VIEWS THROUGH THE MEDIA, SO AS TO PROVOKE A HEALTHY PUBLIC DEBATE AND COUNTERVAILING FORCES.

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-- IN ADDITION, THE GOE WORKS BEHIND THE SCENES TO MONITOR OPPOSITION ISLAMIC FORCES AND INSURE THAT THEY DO NOT BECOME A THREAT TO SECURITY OR PUBLIC ORDER. AT THE HEART OF THIS STRUGGLE, HARDLINE ISLAMIC PROPONENTS BELIEVE THAT EGYPTIAN SOCIETY IS ESSENTIALLY FLAWED -- HAVING BEEN MISTAKENLY SEDUCED FIRST BY THE SOVIET BLOC, THEN BY THE WEST (NOTABLY THE AMERICANS) -- AND IN THE PROCESS, HAVING STRAYED FROM ITS INHERENT ISLAMIC IDENTITY. SUCH VIEWS ARE AND ALWAYS WILL BE IRRECONCILABLE WITH THOSE HELD BY PRESIDENT MUBARAK AND THOSE AROUND HIM.

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THE EGYPTIAN PRESS

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-- Q. ARE WE SATISFIED THAT THE U.S. AND ISRAEL ARE FAIRLY PORTRAYED IN EGYPT'S GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS?

-- A. WE TAKE ISSUE WITH THE SHORT-HAND DESCRIPTION OF THE EGYPTIAN PRESS AS "GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED." WHILE THE PRESS DOES NOT ENJOY FULLY ALL THE RIGHTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FREE PRESS IN THE WEST; IT DOES EXERCISE CONSIDERABLY MORE FREEDOM UNDER MUBARAK THAN UNDER SADAT OR NASSER. DETAILED EDITORIAL DIRECTION HAS BEEN DROPPED, AND MUBARAK INSTRUCTED IRATE OFFICIALS AND OTHER CITIZENS OFFENDED BY PRESS CRITICISM TO GO TO COURT. IT IS TRUE THAT EDITORS AND JOURNALISTS OF THE GENERALLY PRO-GOE "NATIONAL PRESS" (E.G. AL AHRAH) ON OCCASION RECEIVE INFORMAL GUIDANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT ON STORIES TO PRINT, BUT SUCH GUIDANCE IS CONSIDERABLY LESS FREQUENT THAN PREVIOUSLY. THERE EXISTS NO FORMAL GOE MECHANISM FOR PRESS CENSORSHIP. AS FOR THE OPPOSITION JOURNALS, WHICH ARE ESTABLISHED ORGANS OF FUNCTIONING OPPOSITION PARTIES, THEIR FREQUENT AND SOMETIMES HARSHLY-WORDED CRITICISMS OF GOE POLICIES AND PERSONALITIES UNDERSCORE THEIR INDEPENDENCE -- ALBEIT OFTENTIMES, IRRESPONSIBLY.

-- ON THE QUESTION OF FAIRNESS, A CLEAR DIFFERENCE EXISTS BETWEEN REPORTING IN THE NATIONAL PRESS AND THAT IN THE OPPOSITION JOURNALS. THE FORMER GENERALLY PROVIDES EXTENSIVE AND OBJECTIVE COVERAGE OF EVENTS IN THE U.S. MAJOR EGYPTIAN PAPERS MAINTAIN OFFICES IN WASHINGTON, D.C., WHICH ARE ACTIVE AND THEIR OUTPUT -- PROFESSIONAL. ADDITIONALLY, CONSIDERABLE USE IS MADE OF WIRE SERVICE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 CAIRO 25423

FOR NEA/EGY (THREE COPIES) DUNFORD FROM CLARK

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REPORTS -- AP, UPI, REUTERS -- AND THESE ARE OF COURSE FACTUAL. LIKEWISE, TREATMENT OF ISRAEL TENDS TO BE FACTUAL AND OFTEN BASED ON WIRE SERVICE REPORTS. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF ANTI-ISRAELI CRITICISM IN EDITORIALS (ABIT OF IT SHRILL AND VERGING ON ANTI-SEMITISM). FAR THE GREATEST PART, HOWEVER, CENTERS ON ISRAELI POLICY AND ACTIONS REGARDING MIDEAST ISSUES OF WIDESPREAD CONCERN HERE -- E.G., LEBANON, THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. THE U.S. ALSO COMES IN FOR SOME

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ESTABLISHMENT PRESS CRITICISM (LESS SO THAN ISRAEL) ON SUCH MATTERS AS PERCEIVED LACK OF U.S. EFFORTS TO REVIVE THE MIDEAST PEACE PROCESS AND DEFICIENCIES IN U.S. AID PROGRAM.

-- THE OPPOSITION PAPERS CARRY MUCH MORE CRITICISM OF THE U.S. AND ISRAEL, AND FREQUENTLY IT IS SENSATIONALISTIC, BIASED, AND BASED ON INACCURATE INFORMATION. THE SAME IS TRUE OF THESE PARTISAN JOURNALS' ATTACKS ON THE GOE ITSELF. GOE LEADERS LAMENT, PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, THE IRRESPONSIBILITY OF MANY OPPOSITION PRESS STORIES, BUT
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THEY POINT OUT THAT TO MUZZLE THE OFFENDING JOURNALS WOULD HARDLY BE CONSISTENT WITH EGYPT'S DEMOCRATIC TREND. IN THE CASE OF ISRAEL, OPPOSITION PRESS CRITICISM IS BASICALLY ANTI-GOI AND "ANTI-ZIONISM;" ON OCCASION, THERE IS THE SCURRILOUS STORY ORN THAT ARE EASILY INTERPRETED AS ANTI-SEMITIC.

-- WE CONCLUDE THAT THE NATIONAL PRESS IS GENERALLY FAIR IN ITS TREATMENT OF THE U.S., LESS SO OF ISRAEL (BUT STILL FAR FAIRER THAN BEFORE THE PEACE TREATY); THE OPPOSITION PAPERS ARE LESS OBJECTIVE ABOUT BOTH THE U.S. AND ISRAEL.

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5. CIVIL AVIATION: FURTHER TO OUR O-I OF LAST WEEK, WE WOULD APPRECIATE SOME IDEA OF HOW EB PLANS TO RESPOND TO THE EGYPTIANS WHEN THEY SAY NO TO AN ADDITIONAL TWA FREQUENCY OVER EUROPE. THIS IS NOT THE RIGHT TIME FOR THREATS AND IF THERE ARE ANY LURKING IN THE DRAFT INSTRUCTION WE WOULD VERY MUCH

HOPE THAT YOU CAN GET THEM OUT.
VELIOTES

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